



Sport engagement model in Malaysia: Effect of cost and volunteerism

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ABSTRACT

Sport engagement plays a crucial role in promoting physical well-being, fostering social connections, and enhancing overall quality of life. However, various factors, including financial constraints and limited resources, can serve as barriers to sport participation. Additionally, volunteerism has been recognized as a significant contributor to the growth and development of sports in communities. This research study aims to explore the relationship between the cost of sport engagement and volunteerism among individuals in Malaysia. This study was conducted to test the effect of sponsorship, expenditure and volunteering on activeness. A causal correlation study was conducted comprising a total of 501 young people in Malaysia who were selected randomly. This study found that sponsorship, expenditure and volunteerism towards activeness amongst youth are at a moderate level. The findings also showed that sponsorship ($\beta = 0.035$, $\text{sig} = 0.682$, $p > 0.05$) and voluntary ($\beta = 0.098$, $\text{sig} = 0.192$, $p > 0.05$) have no significant contribution towards activeness, the sponsorship and volunteering are not factors which contribute to changes in activeness. However, there is a significant effect of expenditure as an intermediary in the relationship between sponsorship and activeness ($\beta = 0.107$, $\text{sig} = 0.001$, $p < 0.05$), whilst there is no significant effect of expenditure as a mediator in the relationship between voluntary and activeness ($\beta = 0.022$, $\text{sig} = 0.115$, $p > 0.05$). This study provides implications to Ministry of Youth and Sports that sponsorship, expenditure, and voluntary are not main factors which contribute to activeness.

1. Introduction

The youth, as one of Malaysia's major groups, are thought to have ideas and opinions of their own that should be featured in bringing about meaningful change in the country. They are tomorrow's leaders and generally have a huge impact on society. Volunteering among Malaysian youth is not a new phenomenon. In fact, it has been developed and practised well by youths and is recognized by many parties, including government and non-governmental organisations. Their 'voice' cannot be taken for granted in developing the nation's behaviour, and they should be given the opportunity to participate in various aspects. Thus, volunteering is one of the most outstanding ways to ensure that their potential is not wasted.

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Another useful tool for assessing sport engagement along its three dimensions—absorption, devotion, and vigor—is the Sport Involvement Scale (SES) [1,2]. The Utrecht Work Engagement Scale is the source of the SES [3]. One of the two main multidimensional approaches to involvement, this particular conceptualization includes absorption, dedication, and vigour. It has greatly influenced research and instrument creation in the work [4] and educational contexts [5,6]. Despite the fact that the AEQ defines involvement along four dimensions, these dimensions are very similar to the SES's three dimensions. Given that core psychological entails (autonomy, competence, and relatedness) have been proven to be motivating predecessors for sport involvement [7], both measures primarily evaluate engagement as an individual's own resource. Evidence suggests that engagement and psychological needs are related through motivation [8]. As a result, both tools have shown good psychometric qualities across a range of sociocultural contexts and levels of competition [1,2], they are unable to take into consideration important interpersonal relationships as a component of the engagement construct [9]. The influence incentive has on individuals' experiences, perceptions, and behaviours is a crucial idea in the context of sport volunteers [10,11]. For dealing with the administration, planning, and recruitment methods of the event organisers, it is essential to comprehend these relationships. There are still gaps to be filled, such as the effect of engagement on this relationship, even though a large portion of the study has already emphasized on volunteer motivational factors, such as identifying higher levels of motivation among volunteers who felt connected to the event and valued the organization [12–14]. An individual's "cognitive, emotional, and behavioral state directed towards desired organizational outcomes" is referred to as being "employee engaged." [15, 16]. Recent studies have examined the concept of engagement in sport management and sport volunteers [17,18].

Sports volunteers are vital human resources that support the triumph of the sports sector [19]. Sport volunteering has received less attention as a research topic than full-time coaching in elite sport, despite the fact that approximately 1.5 million sports volunteers work as coaches. There are 5.3 million people involved in sports development projects [19]. For its grassroots sports development plan, Malaysia's Ministry of Education (MOE) The sports department is entirely dependent on volunteer school sports coaches. The High-Performance School Sports Developmental Programme (SPTS), a competitive school sports programme run by the MOE's Sports Division, is a project that rewards volunteer coaches for their work in fostering student athletes.

Cuskelly, Taylor, Hoye, and Darcy [20] exhibit a high level of participation and dedication in their volunteer coaching positions in the sports industry. When it comes to preparing players and achieving organisational objectives, volunteer sport coaches must deal with the complexity and dynamics of sports coaching [21]. The organisational commitment of the sport coaches has been connected to volunteerism [22,23], perceived organisational support [22], perceived organisational performance [24], perceived organisational justice [22], and job turnover [25,26]. These studies stressed the significance of organisational commitment in guaranteeing the quality, effectiveness, and sustainability of sport programme implementation.

The effectiveness of grassroots sports development schemes in Malaysia is based on the organisational commitment of volunteer coaches. In order to compete for international elite sports glory, Malaysia, same as many other nations, has included competitive sports into school settings [27]. Despite public sector funding restrictions and low volunteer coach retention rates, targeted athletes must be trained at specific schools in districts and all state sports institutions. Understanding the organisational commitment of these coaches is essential because it may offer additional suggestions for creating a coaching environment that is successful and favourable to keeping them [24].

Businesses are ready to invest in sports sponsorship because it makes sense. All parties gain from the growing strong link that is developing between sports groups, corporations, and spectators [28]. According to Nufer and Bühler [29], the relationship's strength determines how effective sports events are, while Zaharia et al. [30] showed that sports sponsorship is a co-marketing alliance. When asked to respond to these assertions, poll respondents strongly agreed, and their comments were statistically significant. A sporting event is promoted to spectators by the sponsors' brand names and customer perceptions [31]. The likelihood that people will buy sporting event tickets rises with their level of brand trust [32]. Sports culture is involvement in sports activities, exercise and active recreation as well as the existence of a sports culture ecosystem towards a sports nation. National Sports Policy (NSP) as a guide in planning sports development programs, both high performance sports and mass sports. NSP provides systematic and comprehensive leadership for initiatives promoting sports development and raising standards in Malaysia. This policy supports the value of sports in fostering healthy competition, goodwill, tolerance, understanding, and the development of physical and moral qualities, providing a favourable setting for the integration of diverse ethnic groups into a unified nation and strengthen the stature of the nation. The main objective of NSP is to form a healthy, disciplined and united society; providing opportunities and infrastructure to meet the fundamental social, psychological and physiological needs of individuals; develop and improve recreational sports practices that are fun in the community; and achieve excellence at the highest level. This policy comprises the entire spectrum of activity continuum from playing level to competitive sports at the national and international level [33].

This document is one of the references to realize the culture of sports in society towards making Malaysia a Sporting Nation. However, the present study concentrates on the effect of sponsorship, expenditure and volunteering on activeness. In Malaysia, there isn't an institutional or legal basis for sporting volunteerism. Without sufficient direction or backing from the government, each sports association in Malaysia manages its own initiatives. In light of this, the purpose of this study is to ascertain whether there is a correlation between sponsorship, spending, and volunteer activities. Contextual Focus: The study specifically examines the sport engagement model in the context of Malaysia. By focusing on a specific country, it provides insights into the factors influencing sport engagement within a unique cultural, social, and economic milieu. This localized approach contributes to the understanding of sport participation dynamics in Malaysia and potentially offers context-specific recommendations for enhancing sport engagement in the country. This study investigates the effects of both cost and volunteerism on sport engagement. While these factors have been studied independently in previous research, this study seeks to explore their combined impact on individuals' engagement in sports activities. The integration of these two variables provides a more comprehensive understanding of the factors influencing sport engagement, offering insights into the interplay between financial considerations and the role of volunteers in promoting sport participation. Also,

examines the mediating role of expenditure in the relationship between sponsorship and voluntary activities. By considering expenditure as a potential mediator, the study delves into the underlying mechanisms through which financial resources impact individuals' involvement in sports. This mediation analysis adds a novel perspective to the understanding of how sponsorship influences voluntary activities and, subsequently, sport engagement. Although the study focuses on Malaysia, the insights gained from this research may have broader implications beyond the specific context. The factors of cost, volunteerism, and expenditure are relevant in various cultural and socioeconomic settings, and the study's findings may serve as a foundation for future research in other countries or regions. In summary, the Sport Engagement Model in Malaysia: Effect of Cost and Volunteerism study contributes to the literature by examining the combined effects of cost and volunteerism on sport engagement within the Malaysian context. The study's focus on mediation analysis and its potential for practical implications enhance its novelty and research significance, providing valuable insights for theory development and informing strategies to promote sport engagement. This study attempts to answer the following research questions.

1. What is the level of sponsorship, expenditure and voluntary towards activeness amongst youth in Malaysia?
2. What is the relationship amongst sponsorship, expenditure and volunteering on activeness amongst youth in Malaysia?

2. Literature review

2.1. Theoretical framework

The self-determination theory (SDT) is a popular motivational theory that is relevant to the study of participation and enjoyment in sports [34]. To ascertain the origins and effects of engagement, Hodge et al. [7] has conducted an exploratory study with 201 Canadian athletes using self-determination theory. This illustrates how these basic psychological prerequisites are met as preconditions for engagement, the flow state is achieved as a result of engagement, and the flow state itself. One of the five mini-theories that incorporates the SDT is the Basic Psychological Needs Theory (BPNT), which covers the needs for autonomy, competence, and relation. The findings demonstrated that satisfying core requirements significantly and favorably suggested that a desire for autonomy and competence is the primary motivator of engagement [7]. The engagement did not fully assess the effects of fundamental requirements on the flow state because the requirements for autonomy and competence may predict the flow state. Sport researchers have routinely investigated the value of volunteering for events over the past few decades [35,36]. For event planners of all sorts, from small-scale to mega-events, sports volunteers are a crucial and valued human resource [37,38]. For instance, almost 80,000 volunteers were needed for the most recent Olympic Games in Tokyo [39]. Researchers have also noticed a reduction in volunteerism [23], suggesting that organisations need to discover ways to keep and attract volunteers if they want to succeed in the future [20,40]. In the context of sponsorship, Self-Determination Theory (SDT) suggests that individuals who feel autonomous and in control are more motivated to seek sponsorships aligned with their personal goals. Additionally, when individuals feel competent in securing sponsorships, they are more likely to engage in effective sponsorship-seeking behaviors [35]. Regarding expenditure, SDT highlights the importance of autonomy and competence, as individuals who feel autonomous in decision-making and competent in financial management are more likely to make responsible and purposeful choices [34]. In terms of volunteering, SDT proposes that the fulfillment of the relatedness need motivates individuals to engage in volunteer activities. When volunteering provides opportunities for connection, contribution to meaningful causes, and a sense of belonging, individuals are more likely to participate. Furthermore, individuals who feel competent in their volunteering skills and believe in the impact of their efforts are more likely to engage in sustained and self-determined volunteering behaviors [36].

2.2. Engagement

Engagement is characterised as a good mental state distinguished by enthusiasm, devotion, and absorption [3]. Athletes aspire to do their best even when faced with challenges, and vigour is defined by strong levels of mental resilience when executing an activity. Dedication is characterised as intense involvement in one's task and a sense of relevance to the opportunity, as well as passion, inspiration, pride, and challenge. Finally, absorption happens when athletes are entirely engaged on a job, causing time to appear to fly by and making it impossible to disengage themselves from the action. Engagement can be defined as an optimal condition in athletics as well as a sort of well-being. This statement is aligned with positive psychology concepts, which suggest that psychological wellness is more than just a feeling of well-being. This affirmation is consistent with positive psychology principles, which state that psychological health is more than just the absence of disease [41].

Employees' psychological attachment to their jobs is becoming increasingly significant as companies attempt to "make the most" of their human resources [42]. Employees who are energized and dedicated to their work are required, according to Bakker, Schaufeli, Leiter, and Taris [43]. Thus, they require motivated employees." Their argument is substantiated by research demonstrating a link between company employee engagement and productivity and customer satisfaction [44,45]. Volunteers are expected to engage in similar ways, with concerns highlighted regarding their ability to regularly deliver high-quality programmes and equivalent levels of service in sport organisations and events [46]. The term "engagement" is used in this context to refer to the idea of personal involvement as defined by Kahn [47]. Shuck et al.'s [48] engagement model has been applied successfully in the general management scenario. Otto et al. [17] found that it increased satisfaction and intention to continue volunteering, whereas Svensson et al. [18] investigated sports activity among nonprofit and paid staff and found that it improved psychological well-being. Sport volunteers' degrees of engagement can help us better understand how levels of involvement affect motivation because sport academics are

similarly interested in motivation.

Christian et al. [49] also looked into conceptual definitions and linkages between engagement measures and measurements of ostensibly related categories in their quantitative review. They discovered that engagement differed from other job attitude factors like job satisfaction, organisational commitment, and job involvement both conceptually and experimentally [49]. For instance, engagement was described as the activation and experiences that resulted from work, but job satisfaction was defined as an evaluation of the job or its characteristics.

Despite not directly examining engagement, Allen and Shaw [50] reported on volunteers' readiness to 'muck in' and 'offer that little bit extra' at sporting events. According to these findings, the extra-role performance by the volunteers has been linked to engagement. As a result, studying volunteerism may provide important insight not just into the emotive experiences of sport event volunteers, but also into potential correlations with performance.

Passive sport involvement has a stronger association with individual happiness than active sport participation, according to Lera-López et al. [51], underlining the significance of specific forms of sport engagement as a source of relational benefits. The current study broadens the field's understanding of athletic participation and pleasure, emphasizing the relevance of passive involvement and social connections in explaining this association. Finally, the relational nature of different forms of sport participation opens up new paths for research into sport engagement and happiness.

2.3. Cost: sponsorship and expenditure

Sports sponsorship is crucial for marketing and sponsoring different competitions [52]. Donlan [53] outlined how sports sponsorship affects a variety of elements, including the strength of the sponsor-event and the leverage of activities, while also contributing to the development of consumer-based brand equity. He thinks that the best sponsorships support brand excellence and brand loyalty. Koronios et al. [31] claim that by contributing money as well as the sponsors' goods and services, sports sponsorships help to promote a variety of sports.

Analysis of sport spending is a demanding undertaking made more complex by its variable nature [54]. Lera-López and Rapn-Gárate [54] explain this by stating that the phrase is not generally defined. "Sport expenditure" and no familiar consensus on which expenditure categories these variables are involved in. However, there appears to be consensus on areas of sport spending, such as membership and admission fees, equipment and apparel, and training costs—the three variables that pertain to direct consumption, often known as active expenses. Another issue that has been raised is that this variable focuses on global sport expenditure without distinguishing between different categories or types of expenditure [55]. Some authors have included passive expense variables such as sports bets, athletic event admission tickets [56], and private medical insurance [57], into the analysis of 'sport expenditure' over the years. Other research considers all costs, whether direct or indirect. According to this line of research, the sport expenditure includes all out-of-pocket costs incurred by participants in organized sports.

Downward and Rasciute [58] present an overview of economic theories that study sports participation, distinguishing between traditional and unconventional approaches. According to traditional economic theory, the cost of related and substitute items, income, and preferences all have an impact on consumer demand for sports [59], whereas heterodox approaches are depending of the prediction that consumption is affected by the consumer's emotions, social interactions, and lifestyle [60].

Sport Marketing Quarterly did not publish research on sponsor activation until 2006 [61,62]. Research has looked at audience media preferences for sponsorship activation [61], specific executions via website activation strategies [63] and case studies of activation strategies in the Journal of Sponsorship [64,65]. However, sponsor activation has not been studied as a concept or measured from the perspective of the audience.

Sponsor activation falls under the category of "leveraging," however they are not the same. Activation is a subset of leveraging that "promotes the engagement, involvement, or participation of the sponsorship audience with the sponsor," according to Weeks et al. [63], who define leveraging as "exploiting a sponsee and sponsor's association's commercial potential by deploying collateral marketing materials." Leveraging is used to link the sponsor's brand to the asset. Such linkages happen when the sponsor's brand is linked with the pictures, marks, and qualities of the property (event). Therefore, leveraging (connecting brand and property) is a component (or subset) of activation, which is the entire strategy.

Sports sponsorship and product and service marketing are inextricably linked. Sports event promotion and sponsorship have grown in popularity as a result of the commercialization of sports. Companies that participate in sponsorship schemes increase brand recognition and image. According to Doshybekov et al. [66], Sports sponsorship makes ensuring that sports organisations get the funding they need to raise the standard of athletic competitions. Businesses that sponsor events, on the other hand, receive both real and intangible benefits, such as increased brand exposure and presenting a positive image of the company to stakeholders. According to Boççe et al. [67] and Kwak et al. [68], when fans attend sporting events, they become emotionally linked to the events.

2.4. Volunteerism

Volunteerism first took hold in Malaysia in the nineteenth century. The first generation of volunteers was inspired to charity by religious and community revivals in the 1950s [69]. Those who got wealthy, however, withdrew from direct communal involvement as the twentieth century advanced. Today's volunteer initiatives reflect Malaysia's volunteer force's historical development and variety. Many voluntary, public, and private human care organisations are recruiting volunteers to augment and enhance service delivery, indicating that volunteer demand is increasing [70]. The number of volunteers at special events has greatly increased since volunteering has recently become a trend across the globe. Sports events are the most prevalent special events in terms of fundraising, which

may be defined as a function or 'occasion' that tries to collect money for the community or the non-profit group that conducts it. There are many different categories of special events, each has its own level of intricacy and relevance to different groups. Volunteers play a significant part in the victory of many sporting events. As a result, it is the role of the organisers and administration to understand the motivation and pleasure of the volunteers, which will lead to new volunteers for future athletic events. It is tough to understand the volunteers' motives and ensure that they can successfully execute the numerous responsibilities required to achieve their aims. Understanding the motivational elements that result in volunteer satisfaction is essential to developing an effective volunteer retention plan that enables the organisers to attract and keep enough volunteers at sporting events.

Young people can build the capacity and abilities necessary to become engaged leaders and citizens with the help of volunteering. Young individuals who volunteer acquire beneficial social skills that can lessen risky behaviour [71,72]. Young people can transition to responsible adulthood and prepare for the workforce while volunteering.

Volunteering at major sporting events is becoming more and more popular since sport volunteers are seen as one of the event's most significant human resources. Create a structural model that explains the influence of participation on the relationship between motivation and future volunteering intention during a sporting event, suggests Agustin [73]. Its goal was to provide advice to event planners and organisers on how to recruit seasoned volunteers and encourage them to take part in upcoming events. The 168 volunteers for the sports competitions at the 30th SEA Games - Clark Cluster were included in the study. The study indicated that while volunteer privileges, skill enrichment, and social enrichment had a negative impact on volunteer involvement, community contribution, pleasant life experiences, and volunteer engagement positively predicted future volunteer desire. The study came to the conclusion that volunteering had no effect on one's motivation or desire to serve in the future. In order to keep volunteers motivated and committed to their involvement, sport event organisers must manage volunteers by addressing their personal and social needs for volunteering as well as by providing moral support through appropriate job design, effective training, and an inclusive working environment.

Altruism, empathy, beliefs, and leadership are the reasons why people engage in volunteer work, according to Veludo de Oliveira, Pallister, and Foxall [74]. Additionally, volunteering fosters social values, a sense of loyalty and community, as well as youth development and maturity [73]. The University of the People (2020) identified several advantages of volunteering, including connecting with others through meeting new people and making new friendships, which improves social skills; further, volunteering makes people feel energized and happy at the same time because contact with others can relieve stress while doing volunteer work; and third, skill acquisition, which is made possible by taking part in volunteer programs. But when volunteering, one can use their own special skills, like communication and customer service, to name a couple. Finally, volunteering is entertaining, especially if it relates to a person's interest or activity, like sports.

According to Cho, Wong, and Chiu [75], effectively managed volunteers may produce effective volunteer performance. In order to attract and keep volunteers in the future, which is the major goal of the social exchange theory, athletic event planners will need to understand why certain volunteers' volunteer. People enter into and maintain exchange connections in the hopes of benefiting from them, claims social exchange theory. Both parties are interested in trading something valuable. Volunteers are recruited and trained by sporting event organisers to perform the chores required to successfully produce the event. However, the fundamental sources of volunteer motivation are intrinsic and extrinsic motivations. Volunteers subject themselves to offer their skills not just for altruistic and philanthropic motives, but also for these other reasons as well. Social enrichment, a fulfilling life experience, volunteer opportunities, a connection to the sport, skill development, and community service are some of these motives.

The availability of enrichment opportunities is one of the most significant elements influencing volunteer motivation. Volunteers seek out components of the volunteering programme that foster engagement and learning, and providing these chances increases volunteers' enthusiasm for the activities, according to Mustafa et al. [76]. You can develop your abilities in two ways as a volunteer. To begin with, volunteering gives participants the chance to develop new skills including technical and interpersonal communication. On the one hand, a skilled person volunteering their time can use personal abilities that they can grow and refine while performing their duties. Participating in a volunteer programme during a sporting event can help a volunteer obtain and develop a variety of skills, including social interaction, teamwork, organisation, communication, customer service, project planning, and marketing. The application of the volunteer's own knowledge, abilities, and experiences as well as the volunteer's development of new abilities and practical experiences are all considered to be part of skill enrichment, one of the elements that motivates sports volunteers.

According to several studies, giving employees the chance to involve in voluntary activities can help managers in the corporate sector encourage the spirit of voluntarism. While Caligiuri et al. [77] discovered that the most beneficial volunteer actions are when involvement is intentional, Booth et al. [78] claimed that employees are more inclined to participate in volunteer work, if their employers provide support and use the gift exchange theory. Volunteer engagement was found to be positively correlated with both emotional and task-oriented organisational support by Alfes et al. [79]. Engagement theory is applicable to volunteer management even though, unlike paid employees, volunteers at sporting events are not compensated financially. Allen and Bartle [80] found in their study that volunteers' engagement is correlated with relationships to their primary motivation and effective management.

Volunteers are essential to the success of many important athletic events. Volunteers at sporting events will be able to better manage their time if they have an understanding of the elements that affect volunteerism. In this study, the linkages between people's motivations for volunteering, views of the volunteer work atmosphere, and participation were examined using the self-determination theory [81]. 44 marshals and scorers served as volunteers at the 2011 British Women's Golf Open in Carnoustie, Scotland. They responded to questions on their reasons for volunteering, how they saw the volunteer work environment, and how participating affected their mental health. Hierarchical regression analysis was used to examine the connections between climate, engagement, and motivation. Engagement was substantially influenced by volunteers' intrinsic motivation and opinions of a work environment that values autonomy. Thus, the engagement of Volunteers' initial motivation was relevant, but management procedures were also crucial

[80].

Wicker [82] Existing studies that have been conducted from an individual perspective have generally concentrated on the causes and experiences of volunteers in sporting organisations and at sporting events, whereas few have looked at the outcomes of volunteerism. On the institutional level, research has concentrated on issues including volunteer recruitment and retention as well as performance management. The institutional or community environment may have an impact on volunteerism and volunteer management, according to studies using a multi-level viewpoint. From a policy standpoint, research has mostly looked at obstacles to volunteering caused by the implementation of policies and the monetary worth of volunteer work.

It is widely believed that encouraging young people to give their time to help others is good for society. Making an unreimbursed social contribution has been the definition of volunteering throughout history. Even though volunteering does not result in a financial reward, research has shown that persons who volunteer expect other advantages. Studies show that the majority of young people actively engage in volunteer work to meet their personal needs while supporting others in their community [83]. The majority of research on volunteering in Malaysia to date has focused on motivating factors for people to volunteer [84], obstacles to volunteering and its advantages [71], altruism as a motivator for youth volunteerism [69], and psychosocial factors that influence volunteers to help the community [85].

In addition to the organisation's few paid workers, volunteers have become an essential part of providing event services, and they are crucial to the success of big events. As volunteers can lower and relieve the budget on full-time employees, researchers remarked that they could be viewed as a type of capital for organisations [86,87]. Volunteers can administer the programme, assist individuals or assistance organisations, or rally different facets of the community for social participation [88]. Despite the fact that volunteers can carry out tasks that paid employees do, there are distinctions between volunteers and paid employees inside an organisation. For instance, the relationship is more hierarchical, with salaried personnel typically having more supervision responsibilities or recruiting tasks [88]. In contrast, volunteers are more driven by social connection and the chance to contribute to the organization's success than paid employees are, who are driven in part by their income [79]. When someone invests time in a job to use their abilities and creativity in exchange for happiness, psychic benefits in the form of outcomes or achievements, and recognition, volunteer labour may resemble paid work [89].

3. Material and methods

3.1. Research design

This study employed a quantitative research design, utilizing surveys or questionnaires to collect data. The research approach used was causal correlation, which aimed to observe the effect of sponsorship, expenditure, and voluntary activities on individuals' activeness. A causal correlation approach is suitable for examining the relationships between variables and understanding the potential mediating role of expenditure in the relationship between sponsorship and voluntary activities.

3.2. Participant

This study comprised a total of 501 Malaysian youth who were selected randomly. According to Kricjie and Morgan [90] sampling, a population of 1,000,000 and above can be represented by 385 samples. However, the number of samples was increased by 30 % to avoid the occurrence of errors from the data obtained until the number obtained was 501. After the screening and cleaning process, no data errors have occurred until the researcher used the 501 sample for full use.

3.3. Instrument

This study uses instruments adapted from previous studies. A five-point Likert agreement scale was used to obtain information from study participants to measure sponsorship, expenditure and volunteering towards activeness. The instrument was validated by four experts to evaluate from the aspects of content, construct and face validity and it was four experts because it's the minimum requirements is 4 for validation instrument, and the experts had more than five years experiences in the sport science. All experts involved agreed on the instruments used. A pilot study was conducted on 150 youth to validate the instrument used. The exploratory factor analysis test conducted shows that the loading value for each item in the construct is more than 0.5. KMO and Bartlett's tests show that a good relationship exists amongst the items in the constructed construct. Variable sponsorship, expenditure, voluntary and activeness are accepted. The reliability of the instrument for sponsorship, expenditure, voluntary and activeness shows a high reliability value where each variable studied with a Cronbach Alpha value of more than 0.7. Therefore, every item and construct studied is eligible to be used in the actual study.

3.4. Data analysis

In this study, the data analysis was conducted using SPSS 23 and AMOS 23 software. Descriptive statistics were utilized to examine the levels of sponsorship, expenditure, voluntary activities, and activeness among the youth participants. Descriptive statistics provide a summary of the data, including measures of central tendency (mean) and variability (standard deviation), allowing researchers to understand the distribution and characteristics of the variables in the study. To investigate the relationships between sponsorship, expenditure, voluntary activities, and activeness, the researchers employed structural equation modeling (SEM) using the AMOS

software. SEM is a statistical analysis technique that allows for the examination of complex relationships among multiple variables. It enables researchers to assess the direct and indirect effects of variables and test theoretical models. However, the researchers used SEM in AMOS to determine the influence of sponsorship, expenditure, and volunteering on activeness. This analysis allows for the estimation of path coefficients and the assessment of the strength and significance of the relationships between variables. Furthermore, the researchers examined the effect of expenditure as a mediator in the relationship between sponsorship and voluntary activities. Mediation analysis helps understand the underlying mechanisms through which an independent variable (sponsorship, and voluntary) influences a dependent variable (Activeness) by considering the mediating variable (expenditure). The researchers likely used SEM with mediation analysis capabilities in AMOS to assess the indirect effects and test the significance of the mediation pathway.

4. Results

4.1. Relationships and levels of sponsorship, expenditure, voluntary and activeness amongst youth

The findings of the study in Table 1 show that sponsorship, expenditure, voluntary and activeness amongst youth are at a moderate level with mean values ranging from 2.53 to 2.82. Relationship between variables showed in low to high levels with a range value of Pearson correlation in between 0.20 and 0.58 [91].

4.1.1. Measurement model 1

The fitness index model for the first model in Fig. 1 shows the value of $\chi^2 = 3.910$, GFI = 0.887, CFI = 0.849 and RMSEA = 0.076. According to Awang (2016), the acceptable value of χ^2 is less than 5. The GFI and CFI must be more than 0.8 and the acceptable RMSEA value is less than 0.08. Therefore, the first measurement model has fulfilled the good criterion index. However, there is item H44_d with a loading factor value of less than 0.5 which is 0.32. After the items were dropped, the second measurement model in Fig. 2 showed $\chi^2 = 4.013$, GFI = 0.891, CFI = 0.857 and RMSEA = 0.078. The factor loading for each item in the construct with a range of 0.50–0.85. This means, the model is good and acceptable. The results of the measurement model show that the relationship among sponsorship, expenditure, voluntary and activeness amongst youth is significant with a range of 0.20–0.58. The loading factors for sponsorship (0.64–0.75), Voluntary (0.65–0.85), Expenditure (0.52–0.69) and activeness (0.50–0.79) show 0.5 and above.

Based on Table 2, we can see that Model 2 generally performs slightly better than Model 1, as it has a slightly higher GFI, CFI, and RMSEA values, although the differences are relatively small. However, the reliability of the constructs shows that sponsorship (0.791), voluntary (0.813), Expenditure (0.824) and Activeness (0.658) each show acceptable reliability. The AVE value for each contract has an acceptable range of 0.372–0.523.

In Table 3 values indicate the strength and reliability of the sub-constructs in the research model. The factor loadings represent the correlation between the observed variables and their respective latent constructs. Higher factor loadings indicate a stronger relationship between the observed variables and the latent construct. The composite reliability (CR) values indicate the internal consistency and reliability of the sub-constructs. Values above 0.7 generally indicate good reliability. The average variance extracted (AVE) values represent the amount of variance explained by the latent construct in relation to the observed variables. Values above 0.5 are typically considered acceptable. Based on the provided values, all sub-constructs demonstrate satisfactory factor loadings, composite reliability, and average variance extracted, suggesting good reliability and validity of the measurement model.

4.1.2. Measurement model 2

Sponsorship in sports volunteering programs offers crucial financial backing, enabling the provision of quality sporting opportunities. It can enhance the program’s visibility, attracting more participants and supporters. Sponsors often bring expertise, resources, and incentives, improving the overall experience for volunteers and athletes. Additionally, their association lends credibility and prestige to the program, making it more appealing to potential volunteers and partners, ultimately fostering the growth and success of sports volunteering initiatives.

4.2. The influence of sponsorship and voluntary on activeness

This study shows in Table 4 that sponsorship ($\beta = 0.035$, sig = 0.682, $p > 0.05$) and voluntary ($\beta = 0.098$, sig = 0.192, $p > 0.05$) have no significant contribution towards activeness. This study shows that sponsorship and volunteering are not factors which contribute to changes in activeness.

Table 1
Relationship and level of variables.

	Sponsorship	Expenditure	Voluntary	Activeness
Sponsorship	1			
Expenditure	0.46	1		
Voluntary	0.58	0.33	1	
Activeness	0.21	0.31	0.20	1
Mean	2.73	2.53	2.83	2.82

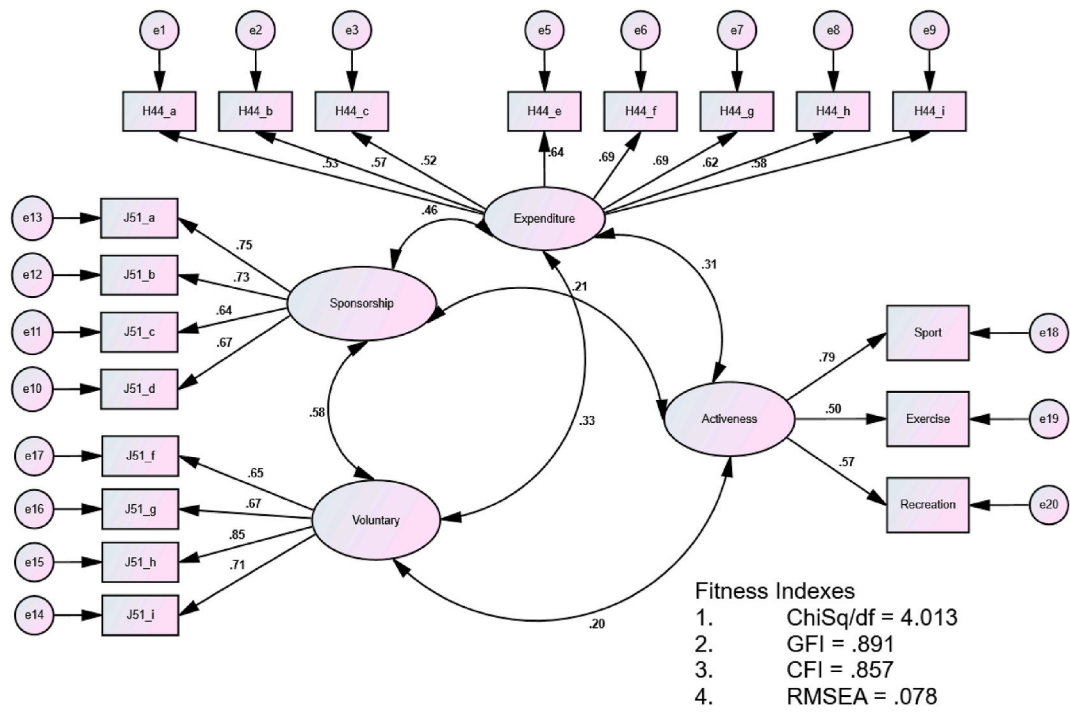


Fig. 1. First measurement model.

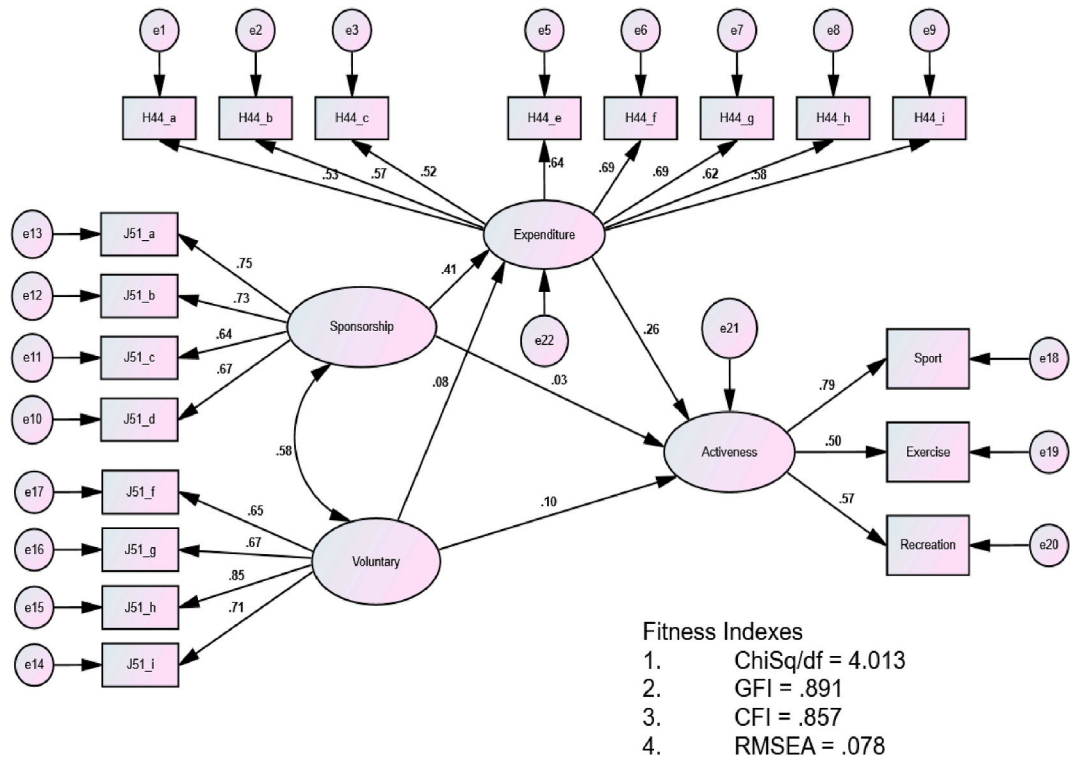


Fig. 2. Second measurement model.

Table 2
Model fitness indexes.

Model	X2/df	GFI	CFI	RMSEA
Model 1	3.910	0.887	0.849	0.076
Model 2	4.013	0.891	0.857	0.078

Table 3
Reliability.

Sub-Construct	Factor Loading	CR	AVE
Sponsorship	0.75	0.791	0.487
	0.73		
	0.64		
	0.67		
Voluntary	0.65	0.813	0.523
	0.67		
	0.85		
	0.71		
Expenditure	0.53	0.824	0.372
	0.57		
	0.52		
	0.64		
	0.69		
	0.69		
Activeness	0.62	0.658	0.400
	0.58		
	0.79		
	0.50		
	0.57		

Table 4
The effect of sponsorship and volunteering on activeness.

Path	Direct Effects		Indirect Effects		Decision
	β	P value	β	P value	
S -> E- > A	0.035	0.682	0.107	0.001	
V- > E- > A	0.098	0.192	0.022	0.115	

4.3. Effect of expenditure as a mediator of the relationship between sponsorship and voluntary activities

This study shows in Table 4 that there is a significant effect of expenditure as an intermediary in the relationship between sponsorship and activeness ($\beta = 0.107$, sig = 0.001, $p < 0.05$), whilst there is no significant effect of expenditure as a mediator in the relationship between voluntary and activeness ($\beta = 0.022$, sig = 0.115 $p > 0.05$).

The results suggest that expenditure plays a significant role as an intermediary between sponsorship and activeness in sport engagement. This implies that individuals who receive sponsorship for their sport-related expenses are more likely to exhibit higher levels of activeness in their sport participation. The financial support provided through sponsorship may contribute to increased opportunities for individuals to engage in sports, which subsequently enhances their overall activeness in sport-related activities. On the other hand, the study did not find a significant mediating effect of expenditure in the relationship between voluntary participation and activeness. This implies that while voluntary involvement in sports may have its own inherent benefits, the financial aspect of expenditure does not significantly influence the level of activeness exhibited by individuals. Other factors, such as personal motivation, social connections, or intrinsic rewards associated with voluntary participation, may play a more prominent role in driving activeness among individuals involved in voluntary activities in sports.

5. Discussion

This study aims to examine the effect of sponsorship, expenditure and volunteering on activeness among youth in Malaysia, and the relationship between sponsorship, expenditure and voluntary activities. This study found that sponsorship, expenditure and voluntary towards activeness amongst youth are at a moderate level, and there is a significant relationship between sponsorship, expenditure and voluntary activities. However, there is no major boost to activeness via sponsorship or voluntary work. Expenditure does not have a substantial role in the link between sponsoring and volunteering and activeness. Some studies [79,92] began with an evaluation of volunteer engagement in the nonprofit sector. Nonetheless, despite rising importance, there is a lack of applicability within the sport industry. Academics believe that sport volunteers are a key human resource that is incredibly important. As a result, research into the

context of sport volunteerism is advised. Previous research on sport volunteers has greatly increased the literature from a range of viewpoints, including satisfaction [20,93], motivation [12,13,58], and experience [14]. However, few have addressed engagement, albeit with a focus on the involvement aspect and its relationship to sport volunteers [10,94,95]. This study focus on the cost factor in sport engagement is significant in terms of its economic implications. By examining how the cost of participation affects individuals' engagement in sports, the research can shed light on the financial barriers that may hinder participation. This information can inform the development of cost-effective programs and policies to reduce financial burdens and promote inclusivity in sports. As well as, Volunteerism plays a crucial role in the development and sustainability of sports activities. Understanding the impact of volunteerism on sport engagement in Malaysia can help identify the motivations and benefits associated with volunteering, as well as potential barriers. This knowledge can assist sports organisations and community leaders in effectively recruiting and retaining volunteers, leading to the creation of a supportive sports culture and infrastructure. Also, the findings from this study can inform the development of evidence-based policies and programs aimed at promoting sport engagement in Malaysia. Policymakers can use the insights to create initiatives that address financial barriers, encourage volunteerism, and provide a supportive environment for sports participation. Additionally, sports organisations can tailor their programs to better align with the needs and preferences of the population, resulting in increased participation and improved overall engagement.

When developing roles that are relevant for volunteers to participate in, organisers may be able to use better techniques if they have a better grasp of volunteer involvement in the context of sports. Better strategies for attracting and keeping those people have therefore emerged for next events. There are noticeable disparities in the sum of money invested in sports, as shown by the time of participation variable. Thibaut et al. [60], Wicker et al. [55], and Thibaut et al. [96] all found that people who engage in sports more frequently spend more money doing so. Contrary to earlier research that discovered this association to be substantial in the case of men, there was no evidence that the sport spending habits of men and women differed significantly [55,96–98]. However, another factor that exhibits notable variations is income. In line with earlier research [97, 100–98], it was discovered that those with greater earnings spent more money on sports. There was also a favourable association. The variables of period of participation, federation membership, and income have anticipating value in terms of sport expenditure, according to Elasri-Ejjaberi et al. [99]. Age and educational level also contribute to the stark variations in sport spending across its major categories. In accordance with Blau's [100] social exchange theory and engagement theory, if these volunteer coaches are given the chance to participate fully in sports by providing fair resource allocation — sports equipment — they will be able to channel their effort and would increase their normative commitment as a result. As a result, while the findings relating the reasons and levels of sport volunteer engagement are pertinent to the current study, different event types may have different effects depending on their scale or focal point. There are consequences for how sport event administrators must concentrate on boosting engagement levels, which eventually affect motivation levels [17].

The adaptation of the employee engagement scale created by Shuck, Adelson et al. [48] to the setting of sport volunteerism, addressing antecedents and consequences, was the key theoretical contribution of this study. Although engagement has been examined in general management contexts, only one study addressed engagement and its applicability among paid workers in the nonprofit sport sector [101]. Because no previous research has employed the engagement lens applied to sport volunteers, the current study filled a knowledge vacuum by providing a nuanced understanding of engagement within the context of sport volunteers. As a result, this study offers proof and backs up Kahn's [47] definition of engagement and approach, as the findings highlight significant connections between the sponsorship, spending, and volunteering under investigation. Additionally, this study examined levels of involvement using the employee engagement scale established by Shuck et al. [48] based on Kahn's [47] theory of personal engagement. It established a conceptual model for these linkages and clarified the connections between sponsorship, spending, and volunteering in the context of sport volunteering. However, this research did not concentrate on athletic participants. Several studies studied and identified positive and negative factors that influence the level of involvement, some of which used engagement-like constructs [102–105]. Many sectors of society have derived benefits from the help of volunteers. The sectors of sport and event, especially, have relied heavily on volunteers who constitute a significant human resource to host a successful event. Events are typically dependent on episodic volunteers who get involved in more flexible, short-term, and once-off volunteering [106,107] and episodic volunteering is likely to become more common in the context of sport events.

This study contributes to sport engagement in the sport literature by concentrating on volunteer sports in Malaysia. Many sporting events and programmes rely heavily on volunteers to succeed [14,20]. The perception of factors that influence sports volunteerism can help with volunteer management. This study aims to see how sponsorship, spending, and volunteering affected levels of activity. The goal was to investigate the relationships between sponsorship, expenditure and voluntary activities whilst volunteering at a sporting event. Engagement, which has been associated with work performance and well-being in paid employees [49], is typified by a psychological connection and participation of personal energies in task performance. Relationships between motivation, engagement, and management techniques also matched SDT. Engagement when volunteering was correlated with intrinsic motivation and management autonomy support perceptions. Therefore, encouraging volunteers' autonomy and increasing their intrinsic drive to volunteer are two techniques that may help managers working with volunteers to increase volunteer engagement. Researchers and practitioners may investigate adopting an SDT paradigm in volunteer management to better understand how to identify, prepare, and retain volunteers in the athletic environment. The volunteers in the current study reported high levels of engagement while volunteering, making it the first to examine volunteerism at a sporting event. It was discovered that engagement antecedents had an impact on the reported outcomes, such as turnover intentions, psychological well-being, and contentment. The current investigation, however, advances our knowledge of volunteerism in sports by illuminating how it affects motivating elements.

6. Conclusion

The study indicates that sponsorship and volunteerism do not have a significant contribution to activeness. The regression analysis shows that the coefficients for both sponsorship and volunteerism are not statistically significant. Therefore, based on this study, it can be concluded that sponsorship and volunteerism are not factors that significantly affect changes in activeness among the participants. As well as, the study reveals that expenditure acts as a significant mediator in the relationship between sponsorship and activeness. The regression analysis shows a significant coefficient for the relationship between sponsorship and expenditure, indicating that sponsorship has an impact on the amount of expenditure incurred by individuals in their sports activities. Furthermore, the study finds a significant effect of expenditure as a mediator in the relationship between sponsorship and activeness. This suggests that sponsorship indirectly influences activeness through its effect on expenditure. On the other hand, the study does not find a significant effect of expenditure as a mediator in the relationship between volunteerism and activeness. This implies that the impact of volunteerism on activeness is not influenced by the amount of expenditure incurred.

Consequently, this study will benefit a variety of event industry interest groups, including academics and event professionals, particularly international sports event organisers as well as it is giving implications to the ministry of youth and sports that sponsorship, expenditure and voluntary are not the main factors that contribute to activeness. This study was the first to examine engagement of sport volunteers through engagement framework. Future research should look at different sporting contexts in Malaysia and other countries from the perspective of stakeholder involvement levels. Additionally, more thorough study might be done that would take into account additional engagement-related antecedent and result aspects. Researchers should look into the different motivational facets of each volunteer, especially how involvement on the cognitive, emotional, and behavioural levels affects other motivational outcomes. Additionally, interviewing event organisers as part of a mixed methods approach to qualitative data collection could provide additional insight into the phenomenon being examined. In order for event organisers and administrators to decide on recruiting and retention tactics with a focus on future levels of participation, further research is necessary. The development of a scale for measuring sport volunteer participation could be another direction for future research. This study's results showed that volunteering has value, so it would be wise to invent a scale particularly for the setting of sports. This might make planning easier for event planners, especially when dealing with returning volunteers. In addition, it might offer more evaluation advantages to enhance future volunteer experiences. There are several scales that measure different volunteer outcomes (such as motivation, commitment, and satisfaction), but creating a scale that only measures engagement would put the emphasis on the individual and work to better understand their needs. The implications of this research are significant for policymakers, sport organisations, and community leaders in Malaysia. By understanding the impact of cost and volunteerism on sport engagement, stakeholders can develop strategies and initiatives to reduce financial barriers, promote inclusive sport participation, and encourage volunteerism in sports-related activities. Moreover, the study's findings can inform the development of targeted interventions aimed at increasing sport opportunities and enhancing the overall sport ecosystem in Malaysia.

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Data availability statement

The data associated with this study will be made available on request. Please contact Dr. Nor Eeza Zainal Abidin at eezazainal@um.edu.my for access to the data and any related documentation.

Consent

All participants provided written informed consent before participation in this study. The first step of consent form process involves the submission of these forms by sample who have a genuine concern to address. consent forms typically request information such as the name of the individual, contact details, a detailed description of the issue, and any supporting documentation. Also, the Participation agree to used their details for research purpose only.

CRedit authorship contribution statement

Nor Eeza Zainal Abidin: Writing – review & editing, Writing – original draft, Visualization, Validation, Supervision, Project administration, Methodology, Investigation, Data curation, Conceptualization. **Hutkemri Zulnaidi:** Writing – review & editing, Writing – original draft, Software, Resources, Methodology, Formal analysis, Data curation, Conceptualization. **Shariffah Mamat:** Writing – review & editing, Resources, Project administration, Methodology, Investigation, Formal analysis, Data curation. **Nofouz Mafarja:** Writing – review & editing, Software, Resources, Methodology, Investigation, Formal analysis, Data curation.

Declaration of competing interest

The authors declare that they have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.

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